

# Council Minutes June 4, 2025 Grace United Church

<b>Executive:</b>		<b>Attendance</b>
Chair	Tory Walko	
Vice-Chair	Daniella D’Andrea	
Past Chair	Marion Staples	
Secretary	Cecily Chiles	
Treasurer	Wayne Pease	Absent
Ministry	Kenji Marui Pat Morrison	

<b>Committee Representatives:</b>		<b>Attendance</b>
AOTS		
Christian Development	Shirley Willis	
Communications	Christopher Cooke	
Congregational Care & Growth (CC&G)	Bev Walkling	
Finance	Paul Cooper	
Region Rep	Marilyn Barros	
Outreach	Paul Cooper	
Ministry & Personnel (M&P)	Laura Black/John Cooke	
Planning	Jim Wicks	
Property	John Cooke	
Proclamation and Special Events	Bev Walkling	
Trustees	Dave Ashdown	
Worship	Bryce McGarvey	

The Meeting was held in person and via Zoom with 15 participants and began at 7:00 pm. There was a quorum.

**1. Reading of Scripture, reflection on the theme *Seeds of Curiosity***

Genesis 28: 16 – *Surely God is in this place, and I did not know it.*

Jeremiah 29:11 – *“For I know the plans I have for you” declares the Lord. “Plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*

What are the challenges we are expecting to face in the short term and in the long term as a church?

What approaches have we considered for these challenges?

How are they guided by God?

At the end of the summer, Council will return and reflect: What has God revealed to us about the problems we expect or are experiencing and the nature of the solution? What tells us that God’s work is at play as we do this reflection process?

Psalm 77: 6-12. *I remembered my songs in the night. My heart meditated and my spirit asked: “Will the Lord reject forever? Will he never show his favour again? Has his unfailing love vanished forever? Has his promise failed for all time? Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion?” Then I thought, “To this I will appeal: the years when the Most High stretched out his right hand. I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds.”*

**2. Approval of Agenda**

**MOTION: to approve the agenda. [Marion Staples / Chris Cooke] – Carried**

Discussion: Add the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary concert.

**3. Approval of Minutes**

**MOTION: to approve the Council meeting minutes May 7, 2025 [Jim Wicks / John Cooke] – Carried.**

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## 4. Business Arising from the Minutes

None

## 5. Correspondence

- Toward 2035 Open Letter (see the letter attached to these minutes). The United Church of Canada has unveiled a new initiative, Toward 2035, as part of its Centennial celebrations. This forward-looking vision and whole church strategy aims to honour the legacy of past generations while charting a bold path for the future. In an open letter, which continues to roll out across the church, General Secretary Michael Blair emphasized the importance of this moment for reflection and imagination. Grace Council will revisit this after the national council meeting.
- Email from Richard Auckland, President of the Region: "I just wanted to express my thanks to everyone for your contributions for the Spring meeting. It takes a team but each of you had an important role. Thanks Kenji for the use of your space and for your message. Please extend a huge thank you to your team in the kitchen and Chris for his in-house tech assistance."
- Email from Louise Hall Local Arrangements Coordinator: "Thank you and everyone at Grace to make the meeting happen. A special thanks to the people who provided an excellent meal under more than trying circumstances. Blessings, Louise"

## 6. New Business

Consider whether council executive be empowered to act on council's behalf until council meets again in October 2025. If a motion is necessary, suggest the following: **MOTION: that Council executive be empowered to make decisions on Council's behalf starting with the closing of the June 4, 2025 meeting until the next regular meeting of Council in 2025. [Marion Staples / John Cooke] - Carried**

## 7. Pastoral Team Reports and Teaching

### A. Kenji Marui's report

- Realtor called asking about the green space and was politely declined; Women's Interval Home in a holding pattern, but Grace would be on a shortlist of locations once they re-engage in searching for transitional housing site. Make an agenda item for the fall to discuss possible property use.
- Hosted Antler River Watershed regional council meeting: leftover ice cream can be used for a Sundae Sunday. Proposed date for Sundae Sunday is Father's Day June 15. John will advise the coffee team.
- Working on hosting duties for 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary concert
- "We Are Listening" is an effort to have United Church ministers offer a listening, non-judgemental, ear to anyone across the country at the same time during the centennial date, June 10. Kenji will set up on the lawn at 2:00 – working with other Sarnia churches to advertise and promote 45<sup>th</sup> General Council opens with online meetings June 22, 28

### B. Pat Morrison's report

- I have been accepted for a research project that builds on the work of the Resonance project, focusing on the work of Charles Taylor, Hartmut Rosa, Byung Chul Han and Andy Root. It is a one-week intensive in August taking place at Calvin Institute in Grand Rapids, Michigan that brings together ministry practitioners from across Canada and the US. The directors were particularly interested in how this literature has informed youth ministry here at Grace and also its application to planning/discernment. I'm excited to have access to talking partners who have read the material and are engaged in wrestling with how it informs the practice of ministry.
- While I was on study leave last month I spent time with UCC youth ministry colleagues sharing about new forms of children and youth ministry informed by the Resonance project, specifically around shaping programming to address mental health and developmental needs of youth in this day, and also sharing Sunday school and confirmation curricula developed here at Grace. We are in the process of planning another gathering here at Grace in the Fall to continue this conversation.
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- The Christian Development Committee continues to entertain 'belonging' as a watch word. As we debrief programming, the Planning Committee discussion night, and other events, we ask, "As we maintain a posture of least resistance, allowing the world to speak to us, what was revealed? What was revealed about 'otherness?' What does this tell us about God, and how does that inform where God is leading us?" We probe beyond our personal stirrings and truly wrestle with the question, "What was revealed beyond warm fuzzies?" As we continue this discussion each month, what is repeatedly revealed is 'deep belonging'. This watchword now serves as the filter through which we develop programs and debrief moments at Grace. The teens who lead the bell ritual are becoming well versed in this Christian discipline.

## 8. Key Ministry Committee Reports

### A. Worship

- Grace Website and Tech Booth Updates: Gord Walkling has prepared a manual for Worship service videography volunteers and is also working with the various groups who will be performing at the June 7 Anniversary concert. Tessa Hall and Gord Walkling have made some progress in securing people to record clips for the Grace website video. People who agree to participate will be directed to Brian White to arrange for a recording time and date. Editing the clips into a final compilation will follow.
- Music Ministry: Marque has been finishing up the planning and rehearsals with music directors from other local United Churches as they finish off preparations for the 100th anniversary celebration concert.

Bryce McGarvey

### B. Christian Development

- Summer Campfire programming will run again this summer. Friday evenings in July 6-8 pm, rain or shine. Everyone is welcome to come for the gatherings, bring a lawn chair.

Shirley Willis

### C. Congregational Care and Growth (CC&G)

- The committee would like to sponsor a student to attend Lambton Centre summer camp, using Benevolent fund. Everyone on the committee was in favour of this donation. Chair of Council, Minister and members CC&G committee will consult to decide on the use of Benevolent Fund for this purpose.

Bev Walkling

### D. Proclamation and Special Events

- There is a collection of Besig and Price music leftover from a concert that was cancelled several years ago. The committee is proposing to sell the sheet music; money raised would go into the Development fund of PSE.
- The committee is investigating fundraising opportunities for a kitchen renovation in the large kitchen.
- Recruiting people for Fall Fair, looking for one person to coordinate a vendors market.

Bev Walkling

### E. Outreach

- 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concert, June 7, 7:30. Council would like to recognize Bill Yates and Marque Smith have been working hard to make the event a success.
- Circles, bridges out of poverty. A dinner
- Inn of the Good Shepherd, 97 clients served at May 28 meal.
- May 15, members attended the Planning function.

Paul Cooper

## 9. Governance and Support Committee Reports

### A. Finance

- Published Operating Budget data to the end of April. Small deficit, \$5000.
- Received annual communication from SCF, eligible for \$2500 withdrawal.
- Assistant Treasurer training continues.

Paul Cooper

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## B. M&P

- Kathy Dodkin's summer hours in the office are Tuesday to Friday 9:00-1:00, between June and September.

Laura Black

## C. Property

- We are pleased to welcome Leslie Veldman to the Committee.
- Small fire on the main kitchen stove on May 30 at the "heat" of the Regional Meeting, put out with an extinguisher. Fire recurred twice until the gas supply was shutoff. No injuries apart from a few racing hearts. Thank you to all who responded and assisted. The stove was inspected by MN Mechanical technician today. They found a leak at the on/off switch for the right-side oven. Gas supply to the oven is now plugged while parts are sourced. Expect a quote for repair in a few days. The stove is fully operational except for the right-side oven. The gas infraction tag was left in place for the oven until it is repaired. HSE replaced the discharged extinguishers. A few lessons to learn:
  - Where to find the gas valve, fire extinguishers, and alarm pull stations. Suggest all Committees do a refresher walk around (perhaps a scavenger hunt).
  - Kitchen fire suppression system didn't activate. It will activate automatically in a large fire or use the pull switch.
- Gym tables were cleaned by Cecily, Karen and others.
- Major yard clean up and hedge trimming completed on May 24. Thank you to the crew of helpers.
- Rental Policy documents – work continues over the summer.
- Carpet Cleaning – carpets were last cleaned by Rotostatic in 2016. There are numerous soiled spots and general cleaning is needed to maintain carpet health. Invited 2 contractors to quote. Scope includes most carpets and mats except under the Sanctuary pews.

**Motion: Council approve carpet cleaning by Rotostatic at estimated cost of \$1270 + tax. [John Cooke / Chris Cooke ] - Carried**

John Cooke

## D. Communications

- Chris Cooke met with Kathy Dodkin, John Scott and John Cooke to review how the church security system is managed and to discuss the main office / office annex layout and furniture needs (ex. a sit-stand desk). We later met with a representative from Manley's who will be following up with a proposal.

Chris Cooke

## E. Planning

- Hosted a Real Connections with Real People event May 15. There was excellent representation from Council. Feedback was positive and it was a meaningful event for attendees.
- Suggestion that it would be good to host a similar event and make it open to all members of the congregation.

Jim Wicks

## F. Trustees

- Insurance for outside groups using the church facilities for events. Complements the rental policy. Any group who is a non-church sponsored activity should have independent insurance.
- Are other United churches dealing with this question of insurance? And how are they dealing with it? Guidance is that user groups should have their own insurance in addition to the church's insurance.

Dave Ashdown

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G. Regional Council

- I attended the Antler River Watershed Regional Council Spring meeting here at Grace UC May 30, and 31st. The meeting theme was Holding and Encouraging Communities of Faith.
- Our Grace Team worked super hard the days leading up to and during the event. The team was able to deal with major challenges Friday afternoon as they prepared to serve dinner. Quick instincts and teamwork allowed the meal to be served and the evening to go ahead as planned. Congrats and thank you to all those involved.
- The guest speaker, Gail Barker helped us reflect on how we can continue to be transformed in faith practice through small group interactions.
- Many information sessions were held, among them were Mission and Service, Theological College updates, Food Grains Bank, United Church of Canada Foundation, The Canadian Bible Society and more.
- Richard Auckland is the new President of Antler River Watershed region (Cheryl Bolton just completed this role)
- Three or four representatives volunteered to sit on the 3 Commissions of ARW: 1) Congregational Support, 2) Pastoral Relations, 3) Discipleship and Justice
- On Saturday afternoon a Celebration of New Ministry was held. Martin Mwale, Rebecca Whiting and Melodee Lovering were celebrated during this service.

Marilyn Barros

H. AOTS (As One That Serves)

- The Ken Plumley scholarship applications are due in June. One application was received and there may be more.

**10. Reflection and Closing Prayer**

Reflection on scripture. Council members were invited to share their reflections.

Meeting closed at 8:50 pm.

Kenji led a closing prayer

**Next Regular Council Meeting: Wednesday October 1, 2025.**

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Tory Walko, Council Chair

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Cecily Chiles, Council Secretary

2025 Devotional Responsibility	2025 Sunday Lock-up Responsibility
January 2025 - Finance	January 2025 – Communications
February – M&P	February - Finance
March – Outreach	March – M&P
April - Property	April - Outreach
May – Trustees	May – Property
June – Planning	June – Planning
July – na	July – Trustees
August – na	August – Worship
September - na	September - CD
October – Worship	October – CC&G
November 2025 - Proclamation and Special Events	November 2025 - Communications
December 2025 - CD	December 2025 - Finance